Introduction
The health boundary classification in British Columbia (B.C.) includes definitions for Health Authorities, Health Service Delivery Areas, and Local Health Areas. These health boundaries are nested such that each Health Authority is comprised of multiple Health Service Delivery Areas, and each Health Service Delivery Area is comprised of multiple Local Health Areas. The Local Health Areas encompass all of B.C. so the classification is exhaustive of all land area in the province.

This bulletin describes the changes made to the B.C.’s health boundaries that were launched on April 1, 2019.

Overview of Changes to B.C.’s Health Boundaries
Version 2018 of B.C.’s health boundaries introduces the Community Health Service Area (CHSA), a geography nested within the Local Health Area. Version 2018 also renumbers the existing Local Health Areas. The enhancements now available include:

- 218 CHSAs
- Urban and rural designations to the CHSAs
- A new numbering scheme for Local Health Areas
- Changes to names for select Local Health Areas

Visualization of Health Boundaries
The health boundaries are visually presented on online interactive maps, available on the B.C. Map Hub. A series of printable maps can be downloaded.

Using Health Boundaries in Analytics
The health boundaries are available for analytics within the Ministry’s data warehouse (Healthideas); initial data integration has been applied to the Client Roster dataset. The methodology table containing the logic for assigning CHSAs and shapefiles are available to enable the geographies to be applied to other analytic products. Work is underway to share these data with B.C. health authorities and researchers.

The database implementation for the new health boundaries involved improving geocoding methods to enable accurate assignment of health boundaries to B.C.’s population. The Ministry now geocodes residents using street address data. Postal codes are only used when street address data is poor quality.
Numbering Scheme
The CHSAs, Local Health Areas, Health Service Delivery Areas, and Health Authorities have been assigned numbers that reflect the nested geography classification.

3 1 2 1

| Community Health Service Area=3121 |
| Local Health Area=312 |
| Health Service Delivery Area=31 |
| Health Authority=3 |

Urban-Rural Designations to CHSAs
Each CHSA is assigned an urban/rural designation that uses validated methodologies from Statistics Canada. The seven-tier urban-rural classification assigns categories of 1 - Metropolitan, 2 - Large Urban, 3 - Medium Urban, 4 - Small Urban, 5 - Rural Hub, 6 - Rural, and 7 - Remote.

The Value of CHSAs and Precision Geocoding
The CHSAs clarify ambiguous meanings in community definitions, minimize redundant data, and document business rules. This translates to an improved knowledge base of local needs that will influence ways that the Ministry and health authorities organize health care delivery to patients, providing care closer to home.

The application of street address geocoding to B.C.’s population provides analysts and researchers a more precise method of geocoding. It ensures accurate assignment of CHSAs but also removes all barriers to the level of geographic granularity available. The ability to understand the relationship between health and geography can go to new levels.

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For More Information
Stay tuned for future bulletins on the roll out of version 2018 of the B.C.’s health boundaries. Other related documents can be found on the Health Extranet. For questions please email: MOHanalytics@gov.bc.ca.